A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Saturday, March 13. 1708.

WHen we had a Design about two Years ago to invade *France, as was generally thought*, we were told, that among a great many other odd Embarkations, there was a prodigious Quantity of Links and Torches ship'd on Board——What the Use of them was, occasion'd many Speculations; *some have thought*, that being afterward carry'd into *Spain* or *Portugal*, they might have been of excellent Use there, *if rightly apply'd*, to have found out some Knaves that lay hid in the Dark in all our Transactions on that side, to have discover'd *French* Spies, *French* Emissaries, *French* Pistoles, &c.

Not but that the Sun shines pretty clear in *Spain*, and they did not want Day light, but because those People lay hid in the Dark, in Cabinets, and Councils of War, in Officers Pockets, and Whores Petticoats, in the Insides of a certain Dutchesses Gold Plate, under General-Officers Feathers, Canopies of State, and the like, and Torches might be very useful to search those Cavities with; but of that hereafter.

Now the *French* are bringing you an EQUIVALENT for your Torches, they wanted Light, and you want Eyes; and *Torches* being to supply one, *Spectacles* will, if rightly apply'd, assist the other.

I do not pretend to Intelligence enough to tell you, *how many Pair of Spectacles they will bring over*; no, no; then I should be had up in some of your Papers for corresponding with *France*; but I must own my self a little acquainted with the Use of Protestant Spectacles, such as come from *France*, by old Experiences; wherefore, beloved Friends,

let

let me enter a little into the Debate with you, about this most useful Subject, and in order to tell you what Sort of Spectacles these are, that the *French* are bringing over; let me tell you a little historically, how often we in *England* have made Use of *French* Spectacles, what Sort of Things they were, and what wonderful Cures they wrought in the respective Distempers of the Times, and the Occasions in which they were apply'd, and 'tis but a Piece of Justice to the *French* to own, that we have been frequently cured of our National Blindness, by the Assistance of the very Eyes they have sent us.

To go back *to the Restoration*, not but that *French* Spectacles had been useful before that, at the Isle of *RHE*, the Siege of *ROCHELLE*, and in other Cases at Home; *but we must begin somewhere*, and I don't care to ravel into *those Ages of Confusion*, but I begin at the *Restoration*—Excess of Joy at the bringing Home our young King *C*.... II. *as all Excesses are fatal in the Body, whether Politick or Natural*; Excess of Joy, I say, having at first over-spread the Nation, it threw us into a strange Dizziness of the Head, a Kind of a National Vertigo or Swiming of the Brain—Indeed it was fear'd by some wise People, it would have issued in a general Lunacy; for the poor giddy headed People run so headlong into all manner of State-Idolatry, worshipping of Court Idols, and debauching themselves by Court Examples, that all the World began to think us mad; but when the first Heat of the Distemper had a little diffused it self, and began to be exhausted; as Nature recovered Strength, the Disease shifted, and fell upon the Eyes of the Nation, *and very dim sighted we were.*

Nay, this Blindness so spread it self, that we could hardly see Good from Evil, see our Way into Mischief, or out of it— We could see no Evil in universal Debauchery, no Mischief in a *P*...*pus* Government, a lewd Court, a drunken Country, a debauched M...ch, or an immoral Nation: We saw no Evil in encroaching Tyrannies, unnatural Persecutions, or illegal Tolerations: We saw no Mischiefs in lending our Forces to a *French* Popish Monarch, to oppress Protestant States, selling *Dunkirk*, demolishing *Tangier*, sending Models of our Ships, and hiring Builders to *France*, to instruct the *French* how to raise their Naval Strength beyond our Power of beating them.

To go on, we saw no Mischief in dis-franchising Corporations, Test-binding our Magistrates, giving up our Native and National Liberties; in Bribing the Electors, and Pension-baiting the Elected; garbling Parliaments, multiplying Lords, or debauching Commons——And a thousand such Things as these, which were practised upon us in the Time of our dim-sighted Circumstances.

So misty was our Sight, and so dark our Politick Understandings, that we were brought to embrace Shadows for Substance; Death instead of Life, Bondage for Liberty, Tyranny for Law, and a Popish Prince to defend the Protestant Religion.

Will any Man say, we were not blind enough, and that a National Dimness had not over-spread us? *Egyptian* Darkness was nothing to those Times; this was a Darkness that might be felt, *Ay*, and it was felt with a Vengeance, for it run us into the Jaws of Destruction, Blood, Slavery and Death.

And now let us examine, *how we came to see*, and who were our Doctors. —Not a Physician in the whole Nation could help us; a few honest Fellows pretended to put on *English* Spectacles upon our Noses to help our Sight, but we could not bear the Operation, threw away the Glasses with Disdain, and deliver'd up the Doctors to be murther'd by the Authors of our Blindness: Indeed we lost some good honest Physicians that way, such as Doctor *Russel*, Dr. *Sydney*, Dr. *Cornish*, Dr. *Armstrong*, Dr. *Colledge*, and many others; and one poor honest Woman Doctor, that had pretty good Skill, and might have done us some Good, Mrs. *Gaunt*.

Then Doctor *Monmouth*, and some others assembled, and thought they had found out a Project for our Cure; but we were so far gone in the Distemper, that we would joyn nothing of our own Assistance in it, and who can cure Men against their Will? So their Project fell with them.

But

But shall I tell you how we recover'd at last? *Indeed all by French Spectacles!* and tho' it was very gradually they were apply'd at first, yet their Operation was certain, and the Cure prevail'd, till the Nation entirely recover'd its Sight: *I do not say*, but they have lost some of the Clearness that they had at first, and begin to stand in need of new Spectacles; but of that hereafter.

But as to the Cure, some *French* Whores coming over in the Year 1672, or thereabouts, among a great many *French* Knick-Knacks, brought over a few of their Country Spectacles, and these falling into good Hands, and being well apply'd, recover'd some People out of their Dizziness and Blindness, and tho' the Debucheries of the Time continued, yet a great many of our blind L—s began to see, such as *B——m*, *Roch—r*, *Shafts—y*, *Whar—n*, and a great many more; and these began a Party of Spectacle Wearers, very near the Court, and render'd King *C....* II. very uneasie. —But the Number of Spectacles those *French* Ladies brought over, being but few, the Cure by Consequence could not spread very far, and so those illuminated Gentlemen fell, most of them, under the blind Fury of the Times, as before.

Then the Popish Plot came upon the Stage; and the Plotters, among their black Bills and consecrated Knives, and a thousand things our blind Imagination form'd to us, had however this Reality, that they brought us two Millions at least of these *French* Spectacles.

And really had we continued to make Use of the Light, they first gave us, we had been a compleatly illuminated Nation long ago, for at that time we began to see clearly; I must confess, this will still confirm the Maxim, I laid down at first, *That we are never illuminated till our Enemies open our Eyes*; but the whole Nation seem'd now to open their Eyes at once, and no sooner was it done, but the wicked encroaching Party fled like a routed Army; Tyranny and Villany, Persecution, Invasion of Liberty, and Dispensing with Law, scamper'd and instantly disappear'd, just as they would always do, if the Nation would but hold open their Eyes.

But, *Sad is the Story to tell you*, Time and Want of a Recruit of *French* Spectacles, render'd this great Cure incompleat, and the Blindness of the Nation by Degrees return'd upon us to a strange Heighth—— The History of which is too long for this short Paper, therefore I shall referr the rest of the Story to my next; in which I shall not fail to inform you, how another Parcel of *French* Spectacles cur'd us again.

The Use of this Historical Account of *French* Spectacles, will not, I hope, be unprofitable; not doubting but I shall let you see, what need we stand in of the present *French* Invasion, and of what extraordinary Benefit, a Ships loading or two of Protestant Spectacles may be, to both the *North* and *South* of *Britain*, at this Juncture.

MISCELLANEA.

I Cannot close up this Paper, without leaving a little Room to advocate for the Men of Distress in both these Nations.

Compassion to the Miserable is a Duty at all Times; but when Misery becomes National, and the Disasters, that have overturn'd some, have been felt by the whole Body; when it is manifest, that Thousands of Families now in Distress, have been made so by the Accident of the War, and the terrible Losses which at home and abroad have been felt by the Enemy, the Taking of Ships, the Stop of Commerce, and the Decay of Manufactures—The Nation seems in Debt to such Men, at least, a little more than at another Time.

Again, Have there been Miscarriages in our Navy? Has not our Trade been well guarded? Have our Ships been lost for Want of Convoy, when the Captains of the Men of War have refused to guard them for

Want

Want of a Bribe? Have our Islands been ravag'd by the *French*, our *Newfound-Land* Trade been lost, our *Russia* Ships been taken, and almost every Trade been plunder'd at Sea? And have these Things, and the like, from the first of these Wars, brought a general Decay upon Trade, and ruin'd and impoverish'd our Tradesmen? Really the Nation is in Debt to the wretched Families that are thus ruin'd, and they seem to have a double Claim to the publick Clemency! — And this I speak in general upon this Account.

There have been several abortive Attempts made in these latter Years, to do something for the general Relief of Men reduc'd and distress'd in Trade; and still it has been clog'd with such Limitations of Sums, and such Oaths, that the true Objects of this Compassion, of whom I have been speaking, have had little Benefit by it, their Sums being too large; and of those that have receiv'd Relief by it, the whole Stress has turn'd so much upon Oaths, that the hard-mouth'd, Iron-conscienc'd Debtor has always far'd best——— Which is a manifest Encouragement to Perjury.

At last we came to an Act of Deliverance; but how partial, how limitted to Men of Trade, how left to the Mercy of ¾ of the Creditors? Who, if they are ¾ in Number, and that above ¾ in Value, may for ever ruin and starve the Man and his Family, tho' it is never so apparent, that he neither has, nor under their Hands can have any thing to pay: How defective therefore this Act is, I say, and how it leaves some in Gaol, who have been really clear'd by it, is but too apparent.

Upon the Union we were always told, an Act of general Relief to Criminals should be obtain'd; and since in our Custom, Debt is become Criminal, and a Man may by Warrant be immur'd, till Death, between two Walls; *not for being unwilling*, but for being unable to pay, *a Cruelty I want Words to express*: Since, I say, Debt is become Criminal, and the Cruelty of Creditors has obtain'd Laws to reach Mens Blood for their Money, the Nation can do no less, than sometimes give an Act of Grace to restore Life to the Miserable, and let Men breath again after Floods of Misfortunes; that this Country may no longer out-do in Cruelty the most barbarous Nations in the World.

In the Days of King *Charles* II. we had an Act to release all Bankrupts, who upon Oath could affirm, they had not 5 *l.* left in the World, and without Limitation of the Sum; and I could name you now several flourishing Families, and considerable Merchants upon the *Exchange*, who were deliver'd by that Act, and being restor'd to the Common-wealth, have by their Industry raised themselves to good Fortunes again; and among these, some Instances can be given, to the Honour of that Clemency, of Persons so discharg'd, who have fully repaid their Debts, from which they have been so discharg'd; others have liv'd to see some of their Creditors fall into Distress, and have reliev'd them.

I know, there will be Opposition to any Act of this Nature, and we see a Petition already exhibited in the Name of the Citizens of *London* against the present Bill. (*Vide the Votes*) If the Petitioners had call'd themselves *some Citizens of London*, it might possibly have been true; but *as it is*, I presume to say, *it cannot be true*, much less MODEST. When I hear, what their learned Council can alledge against discharging Men that have nothing to pay, and are ready to deliver up even their Beds from under them upon Oath, and are content, that they, who strain their Consciences for their Liberty, if any such can be found, shall be hang'd as a Thief; when, I say, I can hear, what any Lawyer can alledge against this, *I shall say more to the Subject.*

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